DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 397 904 JC 960 513

AUTHOR	Lucas, John A.; And Others
TITLE	Follow-Up Study of Students Taking Honors Courses, 1990-1995. Volume XXIV, Number 10.
INSTITUTION	William Rainey Harper Coll., Palatine, Ill. Office of Planning and Research.
PUB DATE	Nov 95
NOTE	44p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Community Colleges; Comparative Analysis; *Educational Benefits; *Honors Curriculum; *Outcomes of Education; Program Effectiveness; Salaries; *Student Attitudes; *Student Characteristics; Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students
IDENTIFIERS	William Rainey Harper College IL

ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken at William Rainey Harper College in Illinois to determine the effect of the college's Honors program on students who had completed at least one Honors course from spring 1990 to spring 1995. Questionnaires were mailed to 372 students, representing 547 enrollments in 23 different courses and 16 different disciplines. Study findings, based on responses from 165 former students, included the following: (1) compared to the general student population at the college, Honors students were more likely to be younger and female and less likely to belong to a minority group; (2) 45% of the former Honors students were employed full-time, 34% were employed part-time, 5% were unemployed, and 16% were not employed by choice; (3) the average full-time salary of former Honors students was $28,500, compared to $25,700 for all recent former students; (4) 72% had continued their education after leaving the college and 37 had achieved a bachelor's degree, compared to 65% and 31%, respectively, for all former students; and (5) with respect to improvements in six skill areas as a result of the Honors course, 58% cited improvements in self-esteem and 81% thought that they had at least somewhat improved in all areas. The survey instrument is appended. (BCY)

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ED 397 904

William Rainey Harper College

Office of

PLANNING and RESEARCH

Volume XXIV, No. 10
November 1995

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF STUDENTS TAKING HONORS COURSES 1990-1995

Dr. John A. Lucas, Director
Office of Planning and Research

Elizabeth Hull, Coordinator
Honors Program

Frances Brantley, Chair
Honors Committee

JC 960 513

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to follow-up students who had completed at least one Honors course in the last five years to determine the program's impact and how these students approach learning.

Three hundred seventy two students met this criteria and a survey was mailed to them. After two mailings and a telephone prompting, 165 completed surveys were obtained for a 44 percent response rate. Honors students, as one would expect, were much better academically prepared and performed much better academically than did the general student population. Demographically they were younger, more likely female and much more likely to have a goal to transfer.

Results of the survey showed that Honors students are much less likely to transfer to regional public universities and much more likely to transfer to major universities, private colleges and international universities than the general student population. Most of the employment situations were described as temporary while honors students were in College, while they were gaining skills or dealing with personal problems. Building self-esteem seemed to be the skill in which these former honors students gained the most.

More than half reported gaining a friendship network and reading more but on the negative side more than half were still not comfortable working in groups. They indicated they were not competitive but were encouraged by the good performance of others.

While these former students reported Honors courses as the single most important factor contributing to their learning and development there was no clear evidence, other than the colleges they transferred to, that Honors students gained any more from their education at Harper College than did the general student population.

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Purpose

The purpose of this study was to follow-up students who had completed at least one Honors course in the last five years to determine the program's impact and how these students approach learning. The study was requested by the coordinators of the Honors Program and the Distinguished Scholar activities.

Methodology and Population Surveyed

The survey population was created by drawing every student who had completed at least one Honors course between the spring of 1990 and the spring of 1995. The Honors courses in this time period represented 60 sections over 11 different semesters. There were 23 different courses and 16 different disciplines represented. The survey population consisted of 372 different students and 547 enrollments meaning each student averaged completing 1-1/2 Honors courses.

The survey instrument shown in the appendix was developed jointly by the Office of Planning and Research and the coordinator of the Honors Program and the chair of the Honors Committee. The instrument was mailed twice to the survey population and a telephone reminder was given if they still had not responded. From this follow-up effort 165 completed survey forms were received for a 44 percent response rate. In addition, another student, who was a senior citizen, responded by writing a note but did not answer any of the questions.

One would expect honors students to differ dramatically and they did as shown by the following table:

Comparison Honors vs. General Student Population - 1990-1995

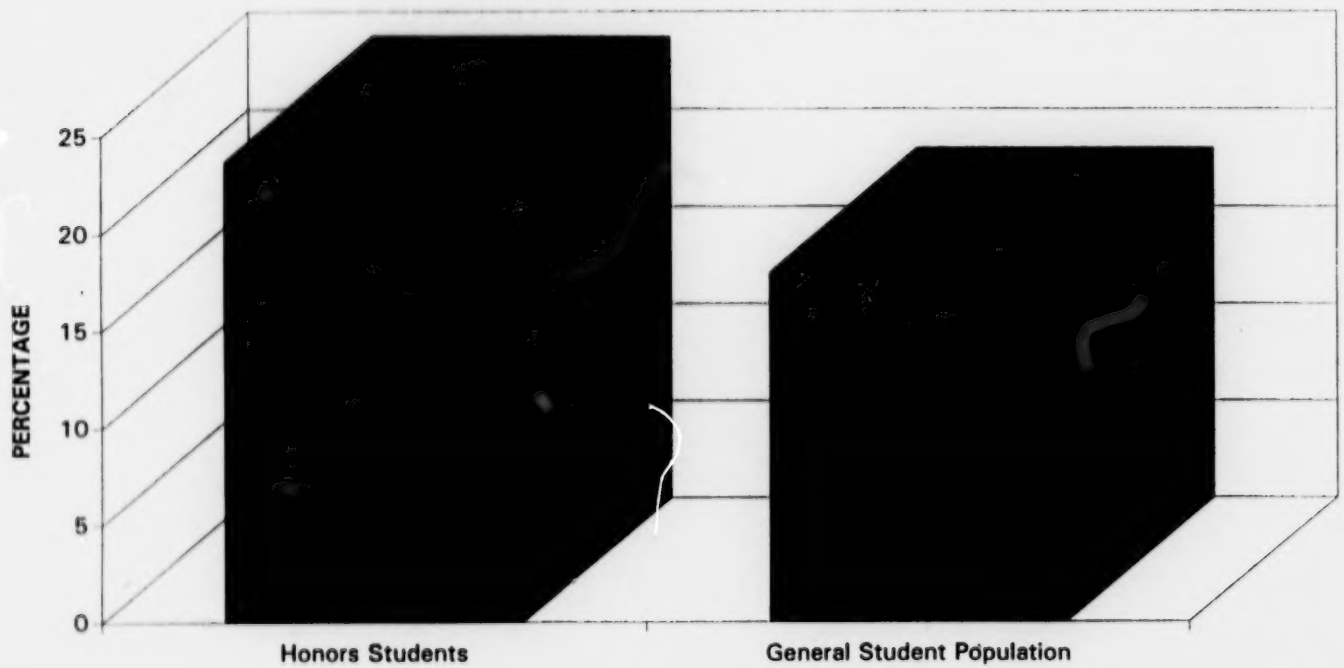
Demographic or Performance Factor	Honors Students	General Population
ACT composite average	23.7	18.0
PCT in top quarter of high school graduating class	59.4	27.4
Percent female	68.3	55.3
Percent minorities	14.1	15.8
Percent Asian	9.6	7.6
Percent black	1.1	2.3
Percent Hispanic	2.3	5.0
Average age at entry to Harper College	22.2	24.5
Percent career majors	13.2	34.0
Percent have goal to transfer	66.2	38.6
Percent have goal to get job	7.2	21.6
Percent have goal to improve job skills	3.7	13.0
Percent have goal at Harper to get degree or certificate	60.6	58.6
Average GPA at Harper College	3.22	2.28
Average credit hours earned	41.93	19.35
Percent who earned degree or certificate at Harper	32.3	12.6

Thus, as one would suspect, Honors students come to Harper College much better prepared academically. They are more likely to be younger and female than the general student population. While there are slightly less minority Honors students, the overall minority percentage masks the fact that there are more Asian Honors students and fewer Blacks and Hispanics in this select group. Honors students are much less likely to be a career student and much more likely to have a goal to transfer. Honors students also perform at a much higher level at Harper College.

Major Conclusions

Honors students are much less likely to transfer to regional public universities and much more likely to transfer to major universities, private colleges and international universities than the general student population. Most of the employment situations were described as temporary while Honors students were in college gaining skills or dealing with personal problems. Building self-esteem seemed to be the quality in which these former Honors students gained the most.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION - - ACT Composite



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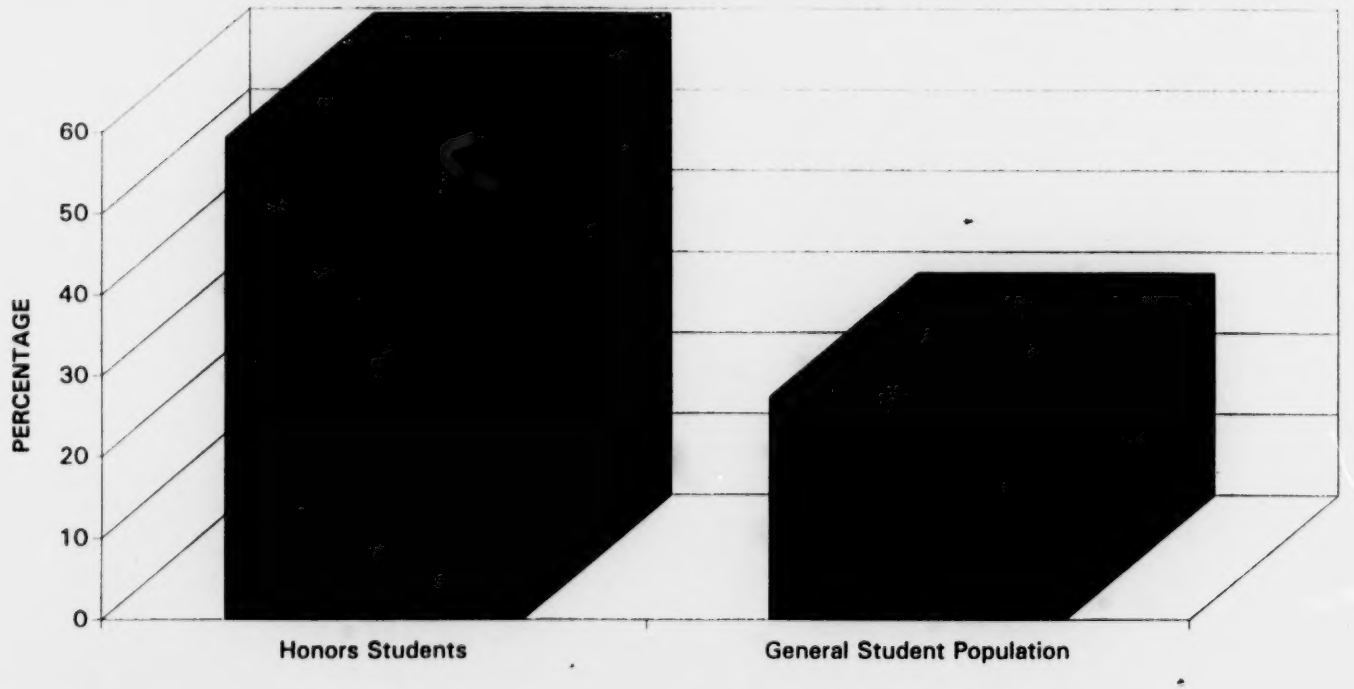
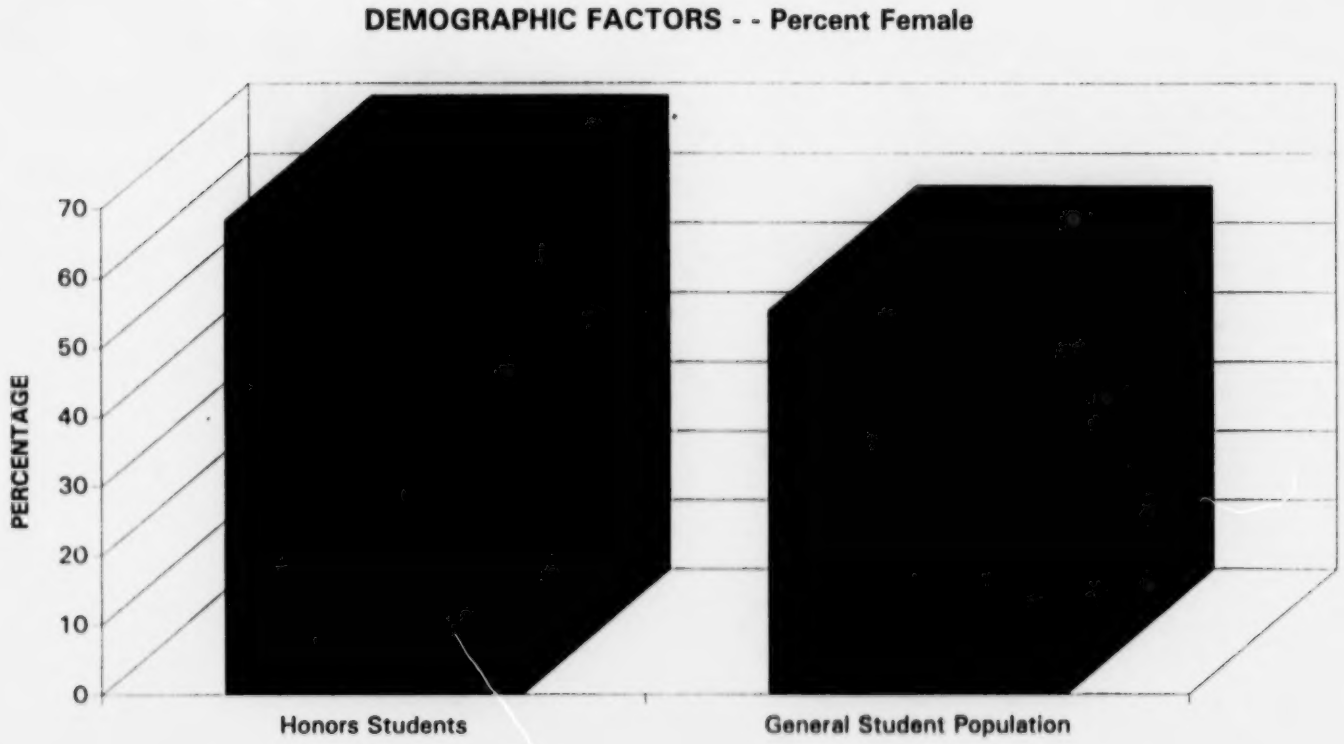
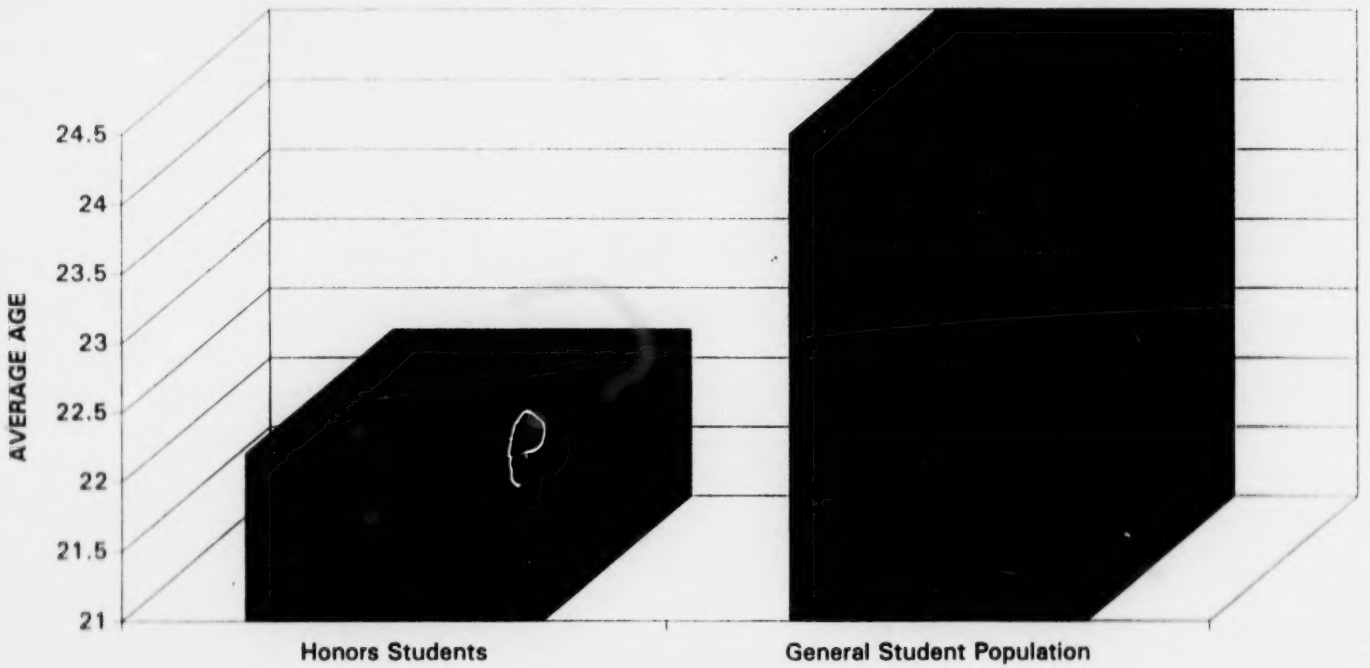
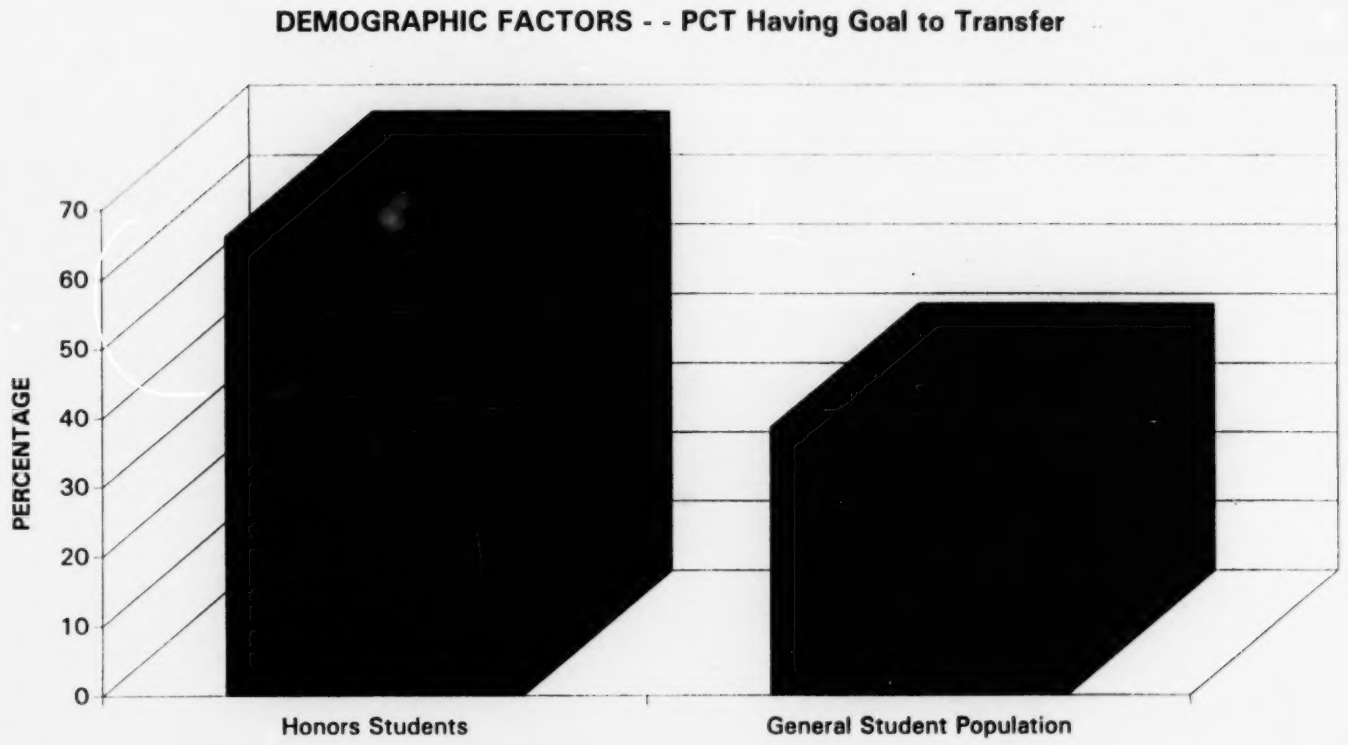

ACADEMIC PREPARATION - - Percent in Top Qtr of H.S. Graduating Class
PERCENTAGE
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Honors Students
General Student Population

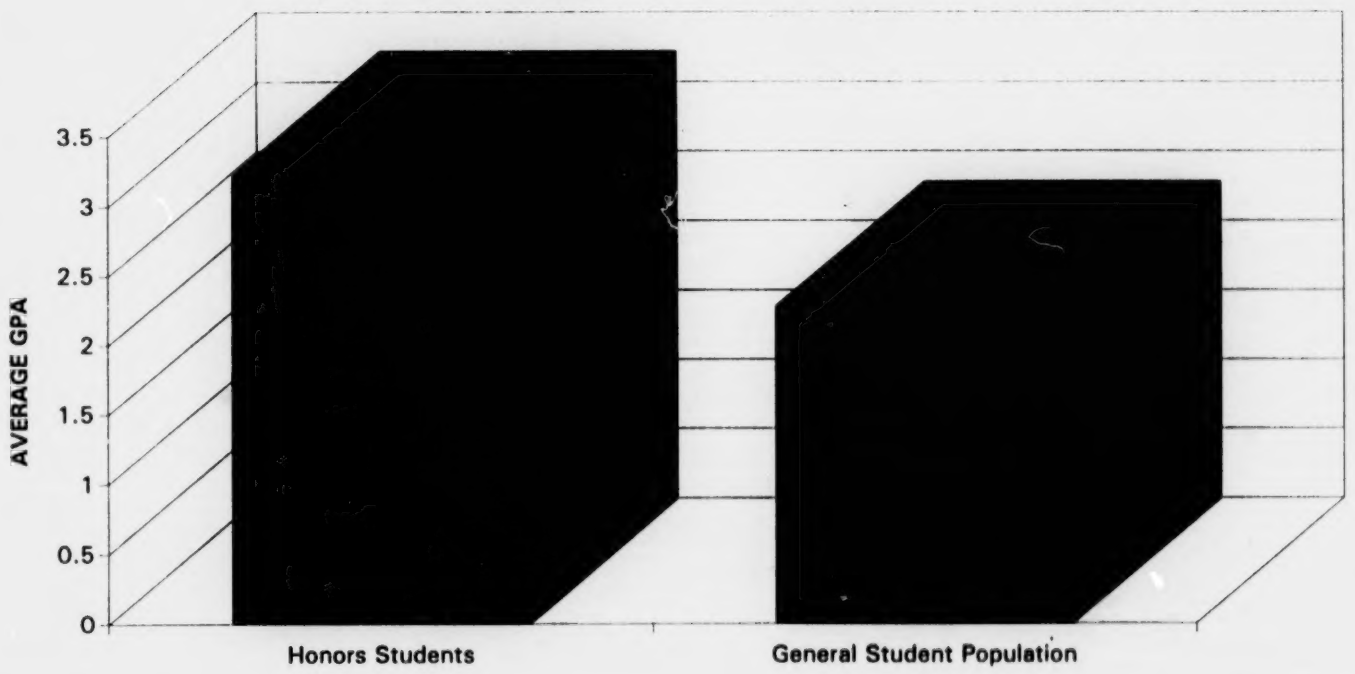

DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS - - Percent Female
PERCENTAGE
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Honors Students
General Student Population

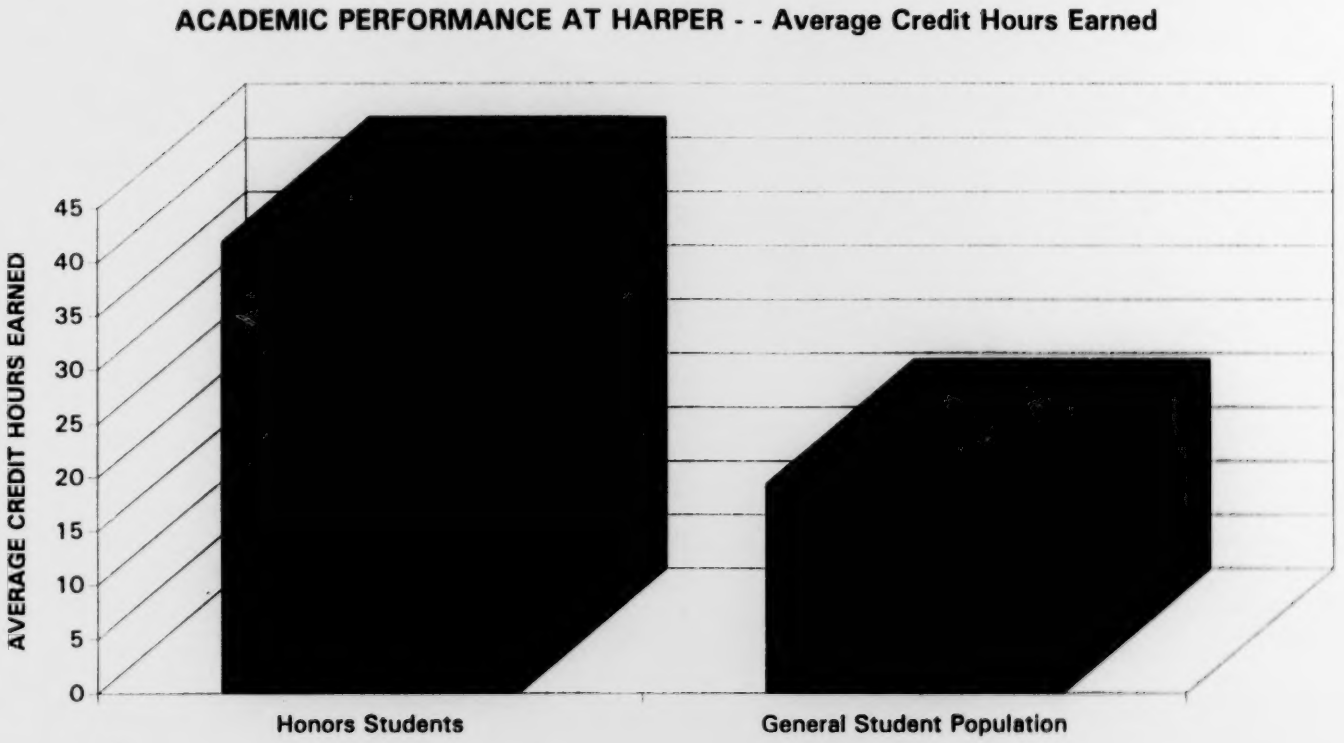
DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS - - Average Age When They First Enrolled



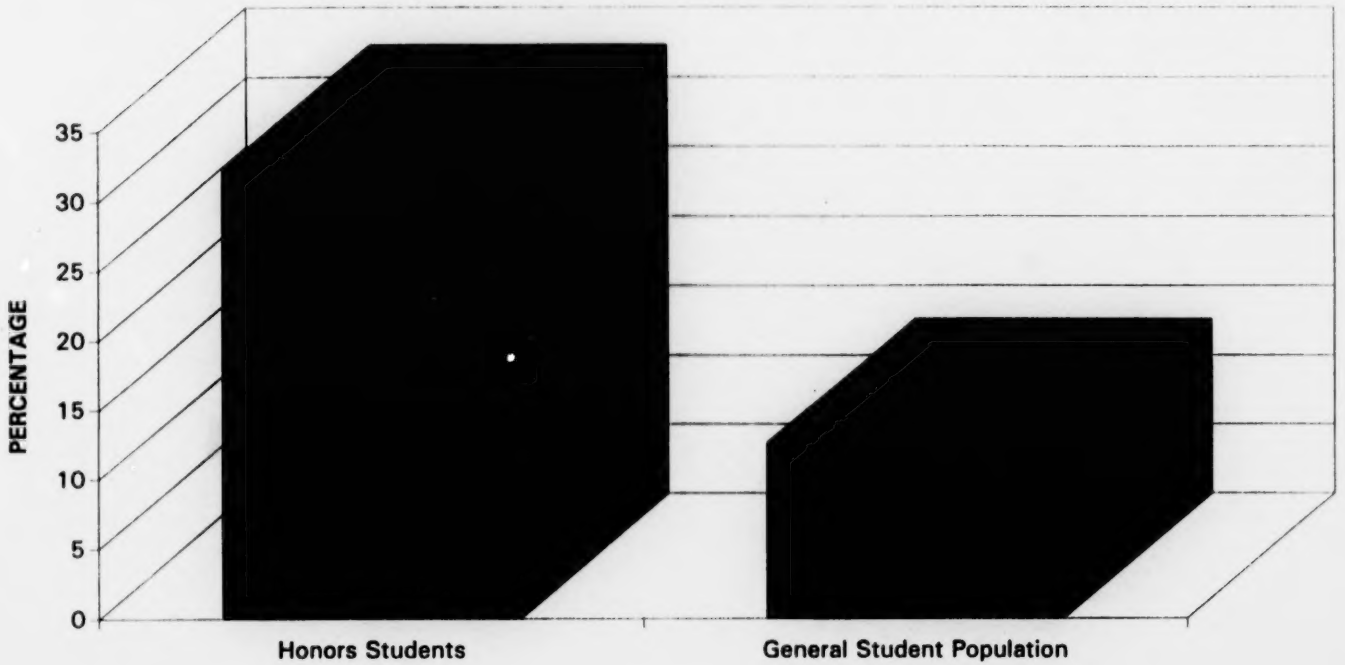

DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS - - PCT Having Goal to Transfer
PERCENTAGE
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Honors Students
General Student Population

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT HARPER - - Average GPA at Harper




ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT HARPER - - Average Credit Hours Earned
AVERAGE CREDIT HOURS EARNED
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
Honors Students
General Student Population

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT HARPER - - Percent Earning Degree or Certificate at Harper



Major Conclusions (continued)

More than half reported gaining a friendship network and reading more but on the negative side more than half were still not comfortable working in groups. They indicated they were not competitive but were encouraged by the good performances of others. While these former students reported Honors courses as the single most important factor contributing to their learning and development the only other dramatic evidence that Honors students gained was in the colleges to which they transferred.

Discussion of Results

Currently this is the employment picture of these former Honors students. Some 45 percent are employed full time, 34 percent are employed part time, 5 percent are unemployed and 16 percent are not employed by choice. Among this latter group over three fourths are enrolled at another college. Among those employed only 26 percent are in what they consider permanent positions.

The temporary positions are distributed among those in college (42%), those gaining experience (23%), and those dealing with personal family situations (7%). Only 36 percent of the jobs are closely related to their Harper College major while another 21 percent are somewhat related. These former Honors students who are employed report that 63 percent are employed at the beginning professional level or higher. This compares to 58 percent for the general student population. Their average full-time salary is $28,500 which is a little higher than the $25,700 for all the recent former students from Harper.

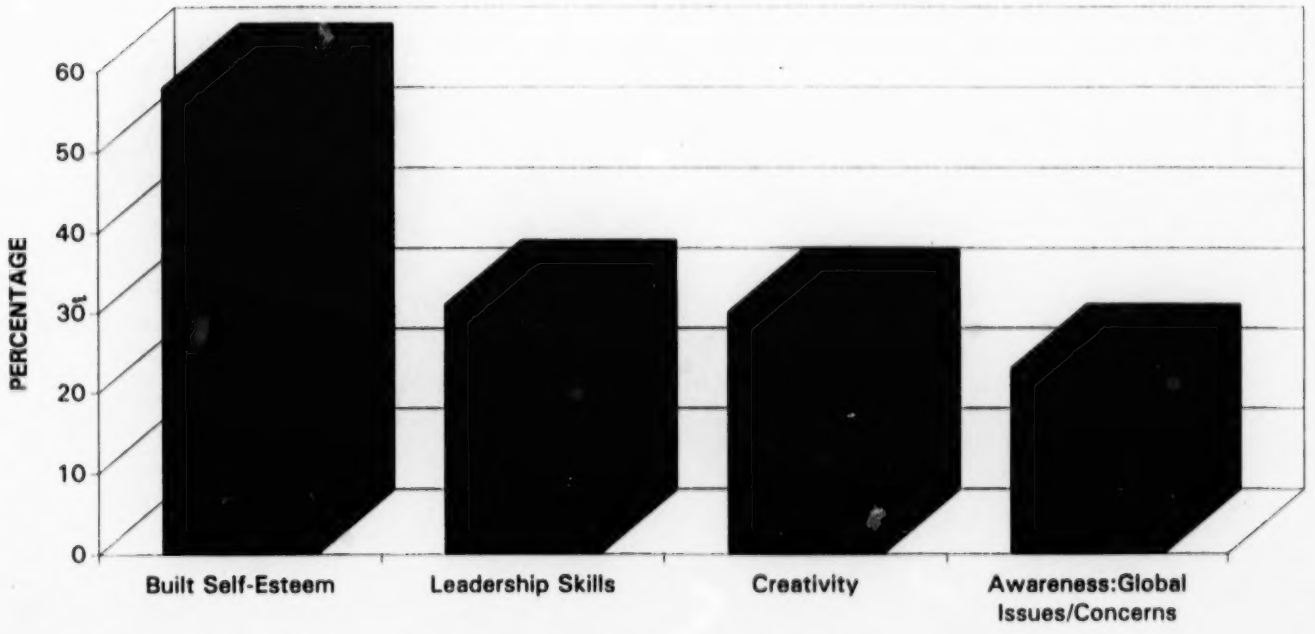
Examining their educational achievements, 72 percent of the former Honors students have continued their education since leaving Harper and 37 percent have already achieved at least a bachelor's degree. This compares with 65 percent continuing their education and 31 percent achieving a bachelor's degree among the general student population. The big difference, however, between Honors students and the total student body is the type of colleges and universities to which they transfer as illustrated by the following table:

Type of College or Universities Transferred to After Harper College	Honors Students	General Student Population
- Regional public universities	37%	65.1%
- Major universities/Ivy League	31%	7.5%
- Large private universities	27%	16.8%
- Small private universities	15%	9.0%
- International universities	5%	0%
- Community colleges and other	6%	2%

Thus, Honors students are much less likely to transfer to a regional university and much more likely to transfer to major universities, large private universities, small private colleges or international universities. Students taking these Honors courses in the last five years were asked how they improved in the following six skill or knowledge areas: building self-esteem, leadership skills, creativity, awareness of global concerns and issues, writing ability and speaking ability. The greatest improvement cited by these students was in building self-esteem as 58 percent said they were greatly improved. However, at least 81 percent or more said they were at least somewhat or a little improved in all six areas. When compared to the general student population Honors students were more apt to be greatly improved but about the same proportions of both groups were affected at least a little as the following chart shows:

	Honors Students		General Student Population	
Skill or Knowledge Area	Greatly Improved	At least a little or somewhat Improved	Greatly Improved	At least a little or somewhat Improved
- Built Self-Esteem	58%	91%	34%	90%
- Leadership Skills	31%	81%	22%	83%
- Creativity	30%	86%	-----	-----
- Awareness of global issues & concerns	23%	81%	-----	-----
- Speaking ability	-----	83%	35%	91%
- Writing Ability	-----	81%	33%	93%

IMPACT OF HARPER COLLEGE ON VARIOUS SKILL OR KNOWLEDGE AREAS OF HONORS STUDENTS - - Percent Who Feel Greatly Improved



Discussion of Results (continued)

Honors students were asked how they were impacted in five other areas. When asked about the establishment of friendships 28 percent said they developed very close friends, nine percent said they developed a large network of friends, 27 percent stated they developed a small network of friends while 44 percent indicated the program had no effect on their friendship patterns. When asked about reading habits, 54 percent said they now read a wider variety and a larger volume of material. Group work was another area of inquiry and 36 percent stated they now enjoy working closely with others while 64 percent would rather work, at least a majority of time, on their own but touching bases with others occasionally. As to competitive feelings, 86 percent indicated they enjoy doing their best while at the same time enjoy seeing others around them succeed. At the same time two-thirds are motivated to perform well when others around them perform well. As to their motivation for further learning, 45 percent describe themselves as having an insatiable appetite for learning and exploration of new ideas. Another 21 percent said they often seek further education for interest sake and 19 percent occasionally seek further education.

When asked to list those items which most contributed to learning and development at Harper, 73 percent said Honors courses, 46 percent mentioned informal talks outside of class with students and faculty, 36 percent cited other courses, and 26 percent listed involvement in student clubs. Finally, these Honors students were asked about their overall satisfaction with their education at Harper College. Recently two follow-up studies of Chemistry and Dental Hygiene students had asked about their overall satisfaction and the Honors student's level of satisfaction was in between these two as shown below:

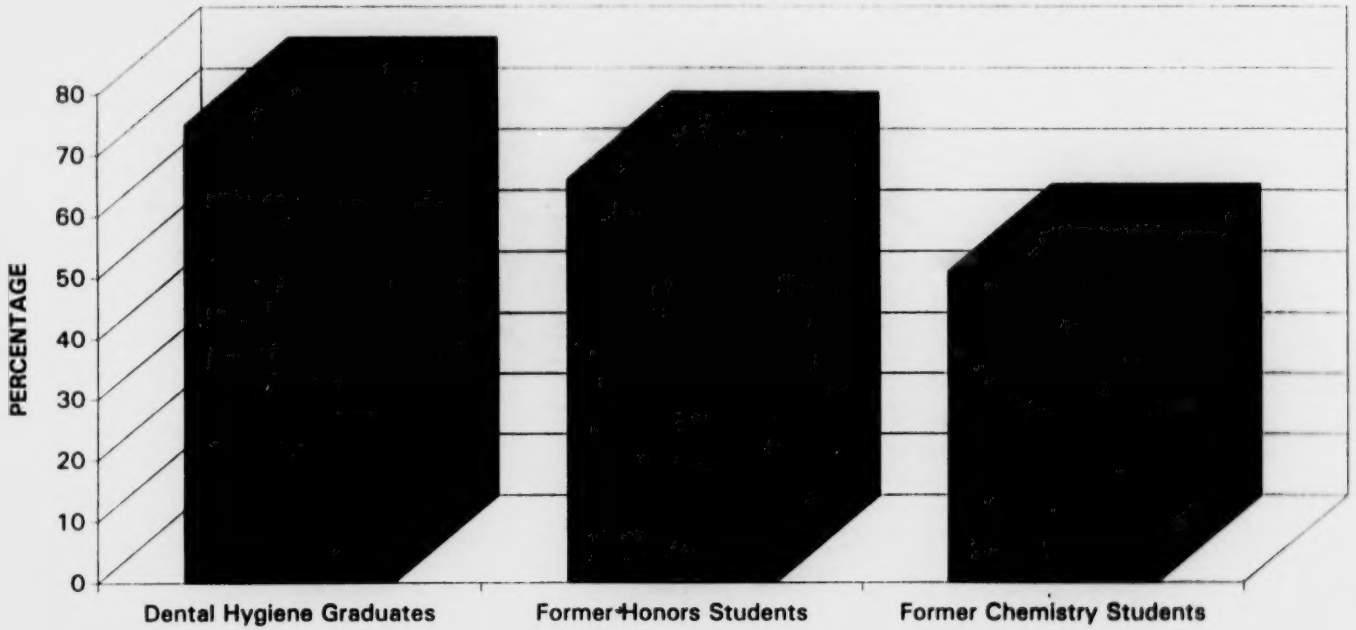
Program	Percent Very Satisfied	Percent At Least Satisfied
- Dental Hygiene	75%	99%
- Honors	66%	98%
- Chemistry	51%	86%

Detailed Results

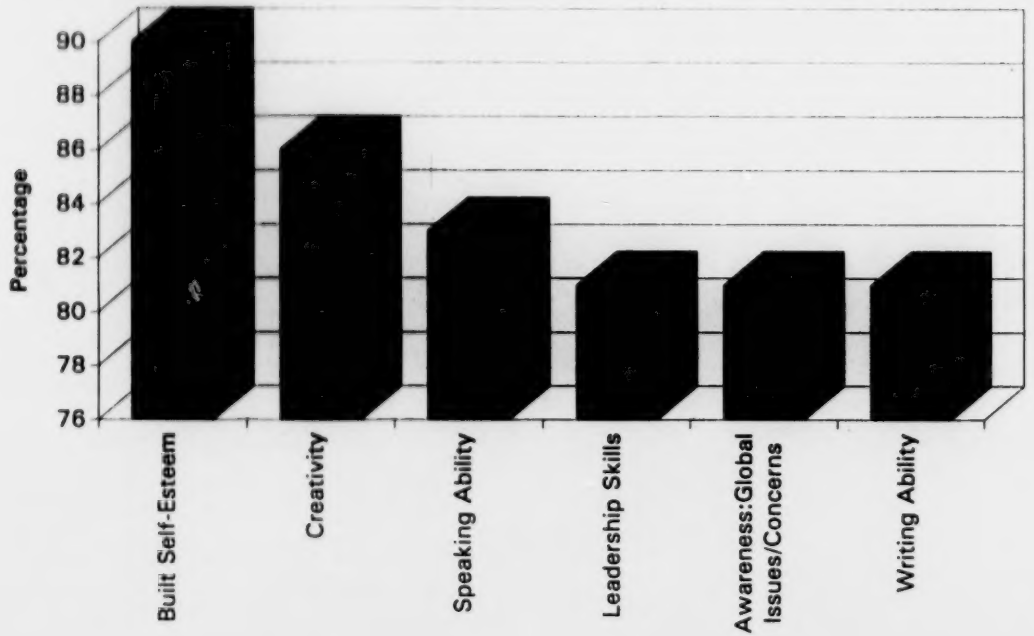
Colleges Attended Since Harper College

Regional Public	N	PCT of 104	Small Private	N	PCT of 104
- Northern Illinois	17	16.3	- Colombia/Chicago	3	2.9
- Univ. Of Illinois/Chicago	6	5.8	- Lake Forest	3	2.9
- Northeastern	6	5.8	- Hillsdale/Michigan	2	1.9
- Eastern Illinois	3	2.9	- North Park	1	1.0
- Illinois State	2	1.9	- Colorado Mountain	1	1.0
- South Florida	1	1.0	- Milikin Univ./Decatur	1	1.0
- Western Kentucky	1	1.0	- Wheaton	1	1.0
- Western Illinois	1	1.0	- Elmhurst	1	1.0
- Winona State	1	1.0	- Northlake Coll./Texas	1	1.0
- Chicago State	1	1.0	- Butler	1	1.0
Sub-Total	39	37.5	Sub-Total	15	14.4
Major Universities or Ivy League					
- Univ. If Illinois/Chicago	12	11.5	**International Universities**		
- Northwestern	4	3.8	- Oxford	1	1.0
- Purdue	3	2.9	- University in Spain	1	1.0
- University of Chicago	2	1.9	- McGill Univ./Canada	1	1.0
- University of Michigan	2	1.9	- University in Korea	1	1.0
- Southern Methodist	1	1.0	- University in Switzerland	1	1.0
- Harvard	1	1.0	Sub-Total	5	4.8
- University of Wisconsin	1	1.0			
- University of Minnesota	1	1.0	**Community Colleges**		
- Yale	1	1.0	- Owensboro/Kentucky	1	1.0
- University of Iowa	1	1.0	- McHenry	1	1.0
- University of Texas	1	1.0	- Oakton	1	1.0
- Indiana University	1	1.0	- College of Lake County	1	1.0
- Arizona State	1	1.0	- Elgin Community College	1	1.0
Sub-Total	32	30.8	Sub-Total	5	4.8

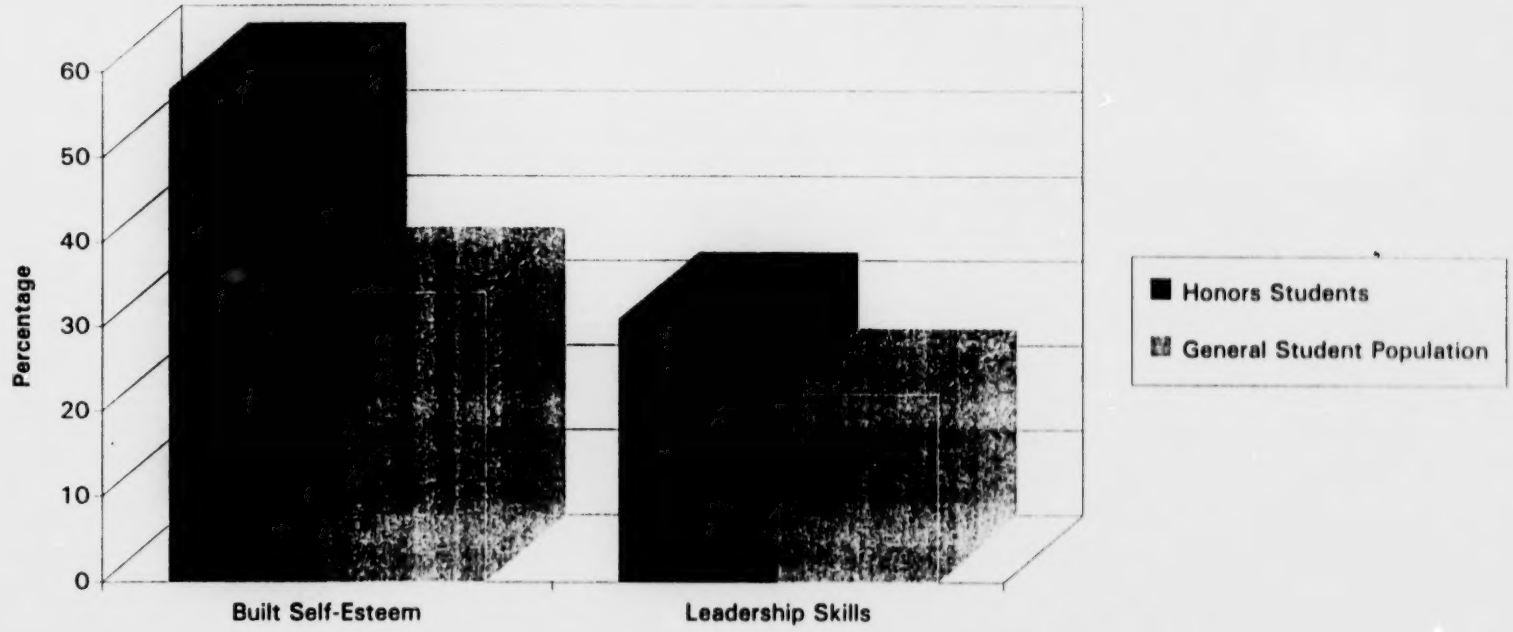
PERCENT OF STUDENTS VERY SATISFIED WITH THEIR EDUCATION OF HARPER COLLEGE - - Honors Students Compared with Students in Two Other Selected Programs



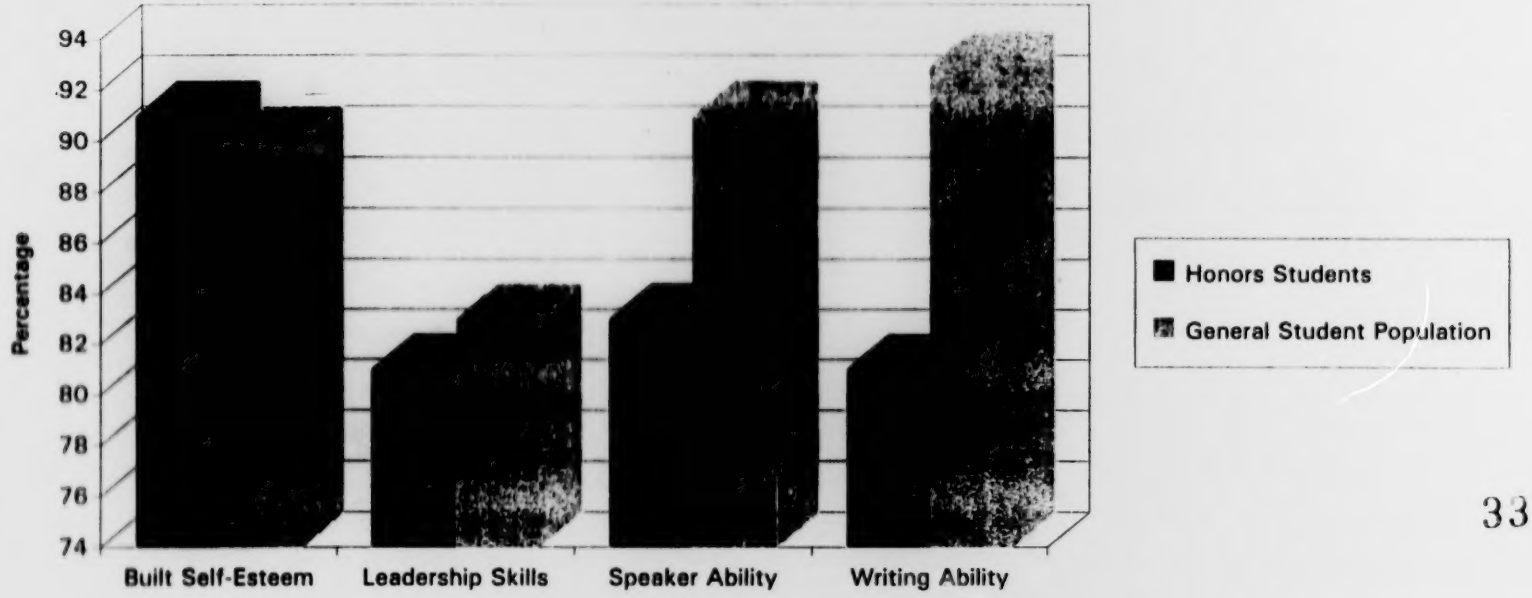
IMPACT OF HARPER COLLEGE ON VARIOUS SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE AREAS OF HONORS STUDENTS - - Percent Who Feel at Least a Little or Somewhat Improved



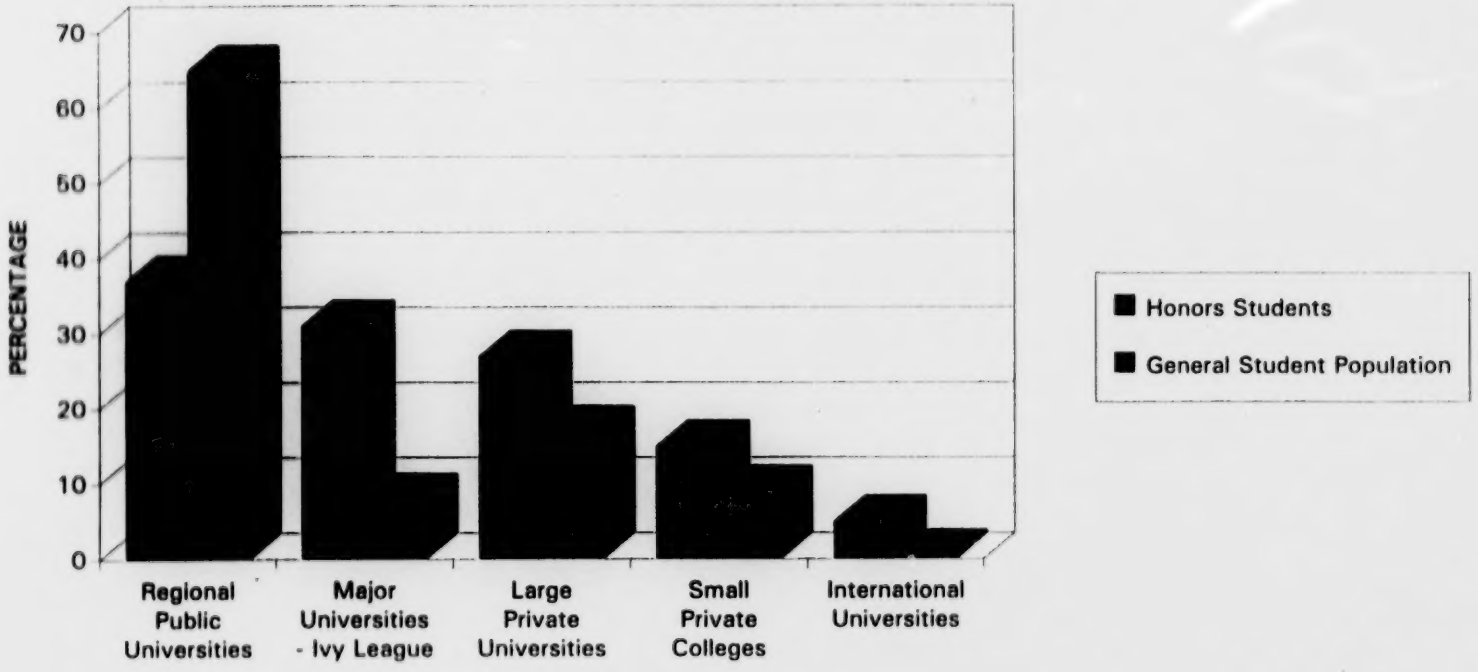
IMPACT OF HARPER COLLEGE ON VARIOUS SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE AREAS -(HONORS STUDENTS VS GENERAL POPULATION) - - Percent Who Feel Greatly Improved



IMPACT OF HARPER COLLEGE ON VARIOUS SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE AREAS (HONORS STUDENTS VS GENERAL STUDENT POPULATION) - - Percent Who Feel at Least a Little or Somewhat Improved



TYPE OF COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY TRANSFERRED TO AFTER HARPER



Colleges Attended Since Harper College (continued)

Large Private	N	PCT of 104
- Roosevelt	11	10.6
- DePaul	8	7.7
- Loyola	5	4.8
- IIT	1	1.0
- Marquette	1	1.0
- Bradley	1	1.0
- Lewis University	1	1.0
Sub-Total	28	26.9

Other	N	Pct of 104
- American Travel Academy Ft. Worth, Texas	1	1.0
Sub-total	1	1.0

Other Courses That Contributed to Learning and Development at Harper College

Liberal Arts	N	PCT of 59
- English	7	11.9
- Speech	5	8.5
- Literature	4	6.8
- Philosophy	4	6.8
- Spanish	2	3.4
- French	1	1.7
- Humanities	1	1.7
- Art	1	1.7
- Liberal Arts Division Classes	2	3.4
All Liberal Arts	20	33.9

Math and Science		
- Biology	4	6.8
- Science	4	6.8
- Math	4	6.8
- Geology	2	3.4
- Astronomy	2	3.4
- Pre-Pharmacy	1	1.7
- Chemistry	1	1.7
All Math & Science	15	25.4

Social Science		
- History	3	5.1
- Anthropology	2	3.4
- Education	2	3.4
- Geography	1	1.7
- Sociology	1	1.7
- Psychology	1	1.7
- Political Science	1	1.7
All Social Science	8	13.6

Unduplicated General Ed.	37	62.7

Vocational	N	PCT of 59
- Computer Systems	2	3.4
- Nursing	2	3.4
- Journalism	1	1.7
- Practical courses that cannot transfer	1	1.7
- ITP/SGN	1	1.7
- Business	1	1.7
- Fashion Design	1	1.7
All Vocational	9	15.3

Cited Excellent Faculty	24	40.7
- Sixteen individual faculty were mentioned at least once		

Cited Instructional Process	7	11.9
- Coordinated studies	2	3.4
- Classroom interaction	1	1.7
- Linked courses	1	1.7
- Small classes	1	1.7
- Study aborad	1	1.7
- Group work	1	1.7

Other General Education		
- Courses not specified	3	5.1
- All courses	2	3.4
- General Education	2	3.4
All other Unduplicated	7	11.9

Other Activities That Contributed to Learning and Development at Harper	N	Pct of 12
- Quality of other students	2	16.7
- Atmosphere	1	8.3
- Networking Opportunities	1	8.4
- Awards ceremony	1	8.3
- Athletics	1	8.3
- Cultural arts events	1	8.4
- Student government	1	8.3
- Disabled Student Services	1	8.3
- Computer Lab staff	1	8.4
- Student clubs	1	8.3
- Overall learning/development	1	8.3
Total Other Activities	12	100.0

APPENDIX

- **Cover Letter**
- **Survey Instrument**

William Rainey Harper College
1200 West Algonquin Road
Palatine, Illinois 60067-7398
708-397-3000

April 6, 1995

Dear Former Harper Honors Student:

Harper's Honors Program is alive and well, and we want it to continue to prosper. In order to do that, we need to continually publicize our program, and let the college and community at large know what it is and what it does. We need your help to do this, since you are one of the "products" of the program. We need to know **if** and **how** the program affected you. The research arm of the college has constructed the enclosed questionnaire, which is being sent to all former Honors students. The results of the questionnaire will be used in a video the college is creating to highlight and promote the Honors program.

We'd like to thank you in advance for assisting us in this endeavor. Please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed envelope.

Sincerely,

Frances Brantley

Frances F. Brantley
Chair, Honors Committee

Elizabeth Anne Hull

Elizabeth Anne Hull
Coordinator, Honors Program

Recycled Paper

Survey of Former Students in the Honors Program at Harper College

1- What is your employment status? Check (x) one.

_____ A. Employed full time
_____ B. Employed part time
_____ C. Unemployed but searching for employment
_____ D. Not employed, by choice

If employed, please answer the next five items – otherwise proceed to item 7.

2- How would you describe your present employment? Check (x) one.

_____ A. Permanent, life-long career position
_____ B. Temporary while I gain some experience
_____ C. Temporary while in college
_____ D. Other - Specify:_____

3- How related is your employment to what you prepared for in college? Check (x) one.

_____ A. Identical
_____ B. Closely related
_____ C. Somewhat related
_____ D. Not related

4- What is your level of employment? Check (x) one.

_____ A. Owner - self-employed
_____ B. Upper management
_____ C. Middle management
_____ D. First line management or foreman
_____ E. Professional
_____ F. Technician
_____ G. Skilled or trade
_____ H. Semi-skilled
_____ I. Unskilled

5- If employed, what is your annual salary range? Check (x) one.

_____ A. Less than $10,000
_____ B. $10,000 - $14,999
_____ C. $15,000 - $19,999
_____ D. $20,000 - $24,999
_____ E. $25,000 - $29,999
_____ F. $30,000 - $39,999
_____ G. $40,000 - $49,999
_____ H. $50,000 - $60,000
_____ I. Over $60,000

6- If employed part time, what is your part-time wage rate range? Check (x) one.

_____ A. Less than $6.00 per hour
_____ B. $ 6.00 - $ 7.99 per hour
_____ C. $ 8.00 - $ 9.99 per hour
_____ D. $10.00 - $14.99 per hour
_____ E. $15.00 - $19.99 per hour
_____ F. $20.00 - $24.99 per hour
_____ G. Over $25.00 per hour

7- What has been your educational level achieved since leaving Harper College? Check (x) one.

_____ A. No further college
_____ B. Some college, but less than a Bachelor's Degree
_____ C. Bachelor's Degree
_____ D. Bachelor's degree plus some graduate work
_____ E. Master's Degree
_____ F. Master's plus but less than another degree
_____ G. Doctorate or professional degree

8- List all the colleges you have attended since leaving Harper:_____
_____
_____
_____

9- How has Harper College affected your leadership capability? Check (x) one.

_____ A. Leadership has been a great deal easier for me because of experiences at Harper.
_____ B. Leadership has been somewhat easier for me because of experiences at Harper.
_____ C. Leadership has been no easier for me because of experiences at Harper College.

- over -

10- How has Harper College nurtured your creativity in problem recognition and problem solving? Check (x) one.

_____ A. To a great extent
_____ B. To some extent
_____ C. Harper College has had no effect

11- To what extent has Harper College helped you build self-esteem and self-confidence in your intellectual achievement? Check (x) one.

_____ A. To a great extent
_____ B. To some extent
_____ C. Harper College has had no effect

12- What kind of friendships and networks have you developed as a result of your experience at Harper College? Check (x) all that apply.

_____ A. Some very close friends with whom I can share some very personal concerns.
_____ B. A large network of friends with whom I can call on for ideas, to work on projects with me, to refer me to other people or just to discuss issues I am concerned about.
_____ C. A small network of friends with whom I can call on for ideas, to work on projects with me, to refer me to other people or just to discuss issues I am concerned about.
_____ D. I already had friends when I came to Harper College and I have made no or few additional friends since coming to Harper College.

13- Has your Harper College experience made you more aware of global concerns and issues? Check (x) one.

_____ A. To a great extent
_____ B. To some extent
_____ C. Harper College has had no effect

14- How has Harper College affected your reading habits? Check (x) all that apply.

_____ A. I now read a wider variety of books and magazines.
_____ B. I now read more books and magazines.
_____ C. Harper College has had no effect on my reading habits.
_____ D. Harper College has caused me to dislike reading for pleasure.

15- How has Harper College helped you give oral reports? Check (x) all that apply.

_____ A. Because I have had speaking experiences outside the classroom at Harper, I have improved my speaking capability and have more confidence to speak in front of groups.
_____ B. Because I have had speaking experience in the classroom at Harper, I have improved my speaking capability and have more confidence to speak in front of groups.
_____ C. Because of my speaking experience at Harper, I have improved my speaking ability a little and have a little more confidence to speak in front of groups.
_____ D. My speaking capability and my confidence to speak in front of groups has not changed because of my experience at Harper College.

16- How has Harper College helped you give written reports? Check (x) all that apply.

_____ A. I have had a chance to write reports for groups outside the classroom and this has improved my writing skills.
_____ B. I have had numerous opportunities to write for classroom projects and this has improved my writing skills.
_____ C. Harper has not improved my writing skills.

17- To what extent do you enjoy or prefer working with others on projects either at work, at College, or in the community? Check (x) one.

_____ A. I enjoy working closely with others, brainstorming ideas and mutually dividing up the work load.

_____ B. I prefer working the majority of time on my own but meeting occasionally with others to touch bases and coordinate our work.

_____ C. I prefer working mostly on my own, but sharing my work in writing and getting feedback in writing.

_____ D. I prefer working entirely on my own.

18- How do you feel about succeeding either at work, at College, or in the community.

_____ A. I enjoy doing my best and enjoy seeing others around me succeed.

_____ B. I enjoy doing my best, but feel neutral about whether or not others around me succeed.

_____ C. I enjoy doing better than others and if others succeed I feel a slight twinge that maybe I have not done my best.

_____ D. I definitely enjoy doing better than others and when others around me succeed it definitely reflects on me that I have not done my best.

19- How are you motivated either at work, at College, or in the community? Check (x) one.

_____ A. When others perform well it stimulates me to perform as well or better than they do.

_____ B. When others perform well it stimulates me to do a little better.

_____ C. The performance level of those around me has no effect on my level of performance.

20- How competitive do you feel either at work, at College or in the community? Check (x) one.

_____ A. I want to be prepared to perform at least as well as the top 25 percent of the people in my present situation.

_____ B. I want to be prepared to perform at least as well as the average person in my present situation.

_____ C. I have no expectations for my level of performance for which I am prepared.

21- How do you feel about future learning for yourself whether formal - classroom - or informal - outside the classroom? Check (x) one.

_____ A. I would only seek further education to improve myself on the job or to increase my chances for advancement.

_____ B. I will occasionally seek further education even if it does not help me on the job if it fits with some of my interests.

_____ C. I will often seek further education even if it does not help me on the job, if it fits in with my interests.

_____ D. I have an insatiable appetite for learning and enjoy continually exploring new ideas and fields.

22- How satisfied were you with your education at Harper College? Check (x) one.

_____ A. Very satisfied

_____ B. Satisfied

_____ C. Minimally satisfied

_____ D. Dissatisfied

23- Which of the following most contributed to your learning and development at Harper College? Check (x) all that apply.

_____ A. Honors Courses
_____ B. Other courses - Specify_____
_____
_____ C. Distinguished Scholar Activities

_____ D. Involvement in student clubs and organizations
_____ E. Attending Program Board and cultural activities on campus.
_____ F. Talking informally to students and faculty after class.
_____ G. Job on campus
_____ H. Other - Specify_____

_____ I. Many things at Harper College almost all equally effective.
_____ J. Nothing

24- Harper College is making a promotional video **about** the Honors Program at Harper. List any achievement or experiences you have had which you would like to see included in this video:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU for taking time out of your busy schedule to respond to this survey -- your feedback is very important to Harper College.

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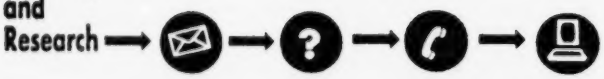

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